

OPEN AND SHUT?

Saturday, November 29, 2008

Chaos, Solitons & Fractals: More questions

Yesterday someone who signed themselves simply as A. M. [posted](#) a message on [The Scholarly Kitchen](#) blog. The post claims to be the first reaction from the Editorial Board of the [Elsevier](#) journal *Chaos, Solitons & Fractals* (CS&F) to the recent *Nature* article on [M. S. El Naschie](#), the journal's current editor-in-chief.

Released on Wednesday, the *Nature* article published a number of allegations about M. S. El Naschie, including allegations about his publishing activities, his claimed affiliations, and the quality of the peer review undertaken at CS&F.

The *Scholarly Kitchen* post states, "It is the view of the Editorial Board that the article contains serious errors of fact as well as libelous material". And it predicts that there will "either be a retraction and an apology from *Nature* and the Journalist [who wrote the article] or a court case in Germany and in England."

A number of obvious questions arise, not least why, if this is really a response from the Editorial Board of *Chaos, Solitons & Fractals*, it has been made under an alias, and on a blog.

However, the post does underline the necessity for the Editorial Board to respond to events, and the best way of doing so would be by means of a collective statement. Importantly, that statement will need to have real names attached to it, and it will need to be made via an official channel — Elsevier's [media department](#) perhaps?

With anonymous posts now appearing that claim to speak for the Board, and the noise about the affair growing in the blogosphere, let's hope such a statement comes soon. As it is, we are witnessing more questions arise each day, and very little in the way of answers.

More importantly, Elsevier itself needs to respond, and to answer the many questions arising from the affair. If it doesn't do so, and soon, the research community will undoubtedly reach its own conclusions.

In fact, it is already doing so: Writing on the [Uncommon Ground](#) blog, for instance, [Kent Holsinger concludes](#) "Whether Elsevier admits it or not, their oversight of this journal appears to have been non-existent. It appears they were more interested in the \$4250 in annual subscription fees El Naschie's journal garners than in ensuring 'that all published reports of research have been reviewed by suitably qualified reviewers', as required by the [Committee on Publication Ethics](#)."

On Wednesday I received an email from an Elsevier spokesperson informing me that M. S. El Naschie would be retiring as editor of CS&F in the New Year, and indicating that someone from the company would speak to me in more detail about the controversy by the end of the week. I have my questions ready; I wait to hear back from Elsevier.

Update 16th March 2010: CS&F has been [relaunched](#) with two new co-editors-in-chief, a new editorial board and refined aims and scope.

Posted by Richard Poynder at [11:04](#)



2 comments:

Anonymous said...

Here is what I posted on this topic on another blog (sbseminar.wordpress.com/2008/11/30/laffaire-el-naschie/):

A lot of attention has been given over the last few weeks to El Naschie

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In the first part of this interview Michel

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and his Journal Chaos, Solitons and Fractals (CSF). I would like to add a few information on the topic by pointing to the fact that he is also editing another journal with JH He which has quite the same characteristics as CSF: International Journal of Non Linear sciences and numerical simulations (IJNLSNS for short) created in 2000. El Naschie and JH He are the two first scientists who published the most in that journal (respectively 19 and 24 papers between 2000 and 2008). Like El Naschie who published 97% of all his papers in these two journals (246 in CSF and 19 in IJNLSNS), JH He also used a lot of space in CSF (26 papers). Of course those two authors are also those who cite the two journals the most... and IJNLSNS is first cited by CSF (at the very high level of 20% of the total citations received by that journal, followed of course by 16% of self-citations from IJNLSNS...

Concerning CSF no one seems to have observed a fundamental change in the countries of origins of the papers since 2004. In the period 2001-2003 only 18% of the published papers in CSF came from China. In the period 2004-2008 the proportion jumped to 43%. And while USA was first among the contributors before 2000 (with 18% of the papers in the period 1993-2000), followed by England and Germany, it dropped to 6% of the papers afterwards as did also the two other countries. There seems to have been a clear move on the part of CSF to cater to Chinese papers as the sudden rise cannot be a simple effect of the growth of Chinese science. It may however be also an effect of the Chinese policy to give a premium (in money) to scientists who publish in English in Journals that are covered by Thomson data base...(At least I saw the mention of such a policy somewhere).

All these interesting data can easily be obtained directly from the ISI Web of knowledge database that most libraries have access to. I think they provide a nice example of what can be learned about journals just by looking carefully at their quantitative characteristics.

[December 06, 2008 11:25 pm](#) 

Anonymous said...

It is nice to see some objective coverage of this entire mess.

A lot of people (e.g.: slashdot) have been saying that every single piece of work put forth in CS&F is complete nonsense. It's obviously untrue, and someone just has to search for the name Penrose to see why. The list of respectable research only grows once the papers are actually read with care.

I have published/submitted some mathematics papers in it recently, and while I don't even remotely resemble a professional, the work is surely not nonsense. I've intentionally included the C++ source code and images for this work, just in case anyone has any silly ideas that it's "nonsense".

As for the physics that I've worked on, it's only a toy model! I really liked working on it, but it's almost more fun just to watch the reaction people have to it... nearly giving themselves a heart attack because they take it so seriously. If I ever fall out of love with physics, even these hilarious reactions alone would be worth continuing on for.

Shawn Halayka
<http://cavekitty.ca/>

[December 27, 2008 12:40 am](#) 

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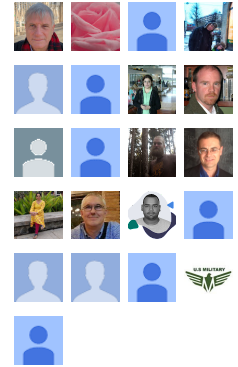
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